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7. — *Shakespeare-Studien.* Von OTTO LUDWIG. Aus dem Nachlasse des Dichters herausgegeben von MORITZ HEYDRICH. Leipzig. 1872. pp. cxv, 540.

ALTHOUGH in Germany the name of Otto Ludwig is well known, and he has a certain reputation as a dramatic poet, there are few, we fancy, in this country, who have ever heard of him. Nor is this strange. Even in his own land his fame was greater for what he had tried to do than for what he had done. His plays, though full of poetry, hardly kept the stage; and it was this failure that inspired the book that we have before us, which, we have no hesitation in saying, will establish his reputation on a surer basis than his poetical power could have done. For it is more especially as a critic that he shines. In this book he frankly confesses his failure as a dramatic writer, and sits down to trace his faults to their origin, to strive to find better ways by the comparison of his own work with the universally acknowledged standards of merit, and by deducing from them the laws that should govern that sort of composition in which he is anxious to excel. He approaches the task with all the adaptability for theory of a critic and the practical knowledge of a poet, — a combination not too often met with. Not that the application to his own works is ever thrust upon the reader; the lessons drawn are only applicable to him in so far as they contain what is universally true, and it is this quality that makes the merit of the book. In its form it is singular. The editor, Mr. Moritz Heydrich, has done his task with real German thoroughness. The material that awaited him consisted of an enormous mass of short, dis-connected notes, only joined together by the fact that they were in the same manuscript volume which Ludwig had used till it was full. Hence we have many unnecessary repetitions, indeed all the faults of conversation; but in spite of these rhetorical faults, the book will be found to be excellent reading. Shakespeare literature in English is apt to take the form of either indiscriminate adulation, or the expression of some author's fantastic whimsies either about the real writer of the plays commonly ascribed to him, or the profession of Shakespeare himself, proving him a sailor, a farmer, a lawyer, a doctor, — who can say what? — and meanwhile forgetting that he was a poet.

Ludwig, with the hearty admiration that all Germans feel for Shakespeare, while he is more especially anxious to ascertain the true laws of dramatic composition, takes Shakespeare as the most useful example, but he by no means neglects either the Greek tragedians or Goethe and Schiller. His own contemporaries, too, he has studied with interest. As a critic he shows that he has destructive as well as construc-

tive powers. This book is arranged only chronologically, but thereby, in spite of its fragmentary state, we can catch very well the growth of the author's mind. His faithful study brought him good results, and none of the intermediate work is without its merits. Of more particular interest to us will be his criticism of Shakespeare and of the German classics, of which we offer a few examples. Writing on "the development of the situation," he says:—

"Shakespeare always avoids the appearance of anything skeleton-like or hurried. Here is an example. Hamlet, led by the Ghost, appears in a more remote part of the platform. He asks, 'Where wilt thou lead me? Speak. I'll go no farther.' The Ghost does not at once begin to tell him. He says first, 'Mark me.' Hamlet replies, 'I will.' And still the Ghost does not begin, he still deepens the impression of his words.

'My hour is almost come,  
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames  
Must render up myself.'

Hamlet says, 'Alas, poor Ghost.' Still the Ghost does not begin, nor does Hamlet continue to urge him; he says:—

'Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing  
To what I shall unfold.'

Hamlet answers again as before,

'Speak, I am bound to hear.'

The Ghost goes on,

'So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.'

"Now Hamlet asks, 'What?'

"But still the Ghost does not say, he simply tells him who he is, for which there is really no necessity. He continues to heighten the solemnity of the moment, by describing the pains of Purgatory all the more vividly by telling us what impression the description, that he cannot give, would make upon Hamlet. At the same time this gives him an opportunity for poetical description. After a long sentence his, 'List, Hamlet, O list,' makes a wonderful impression. What must that be that he has to tell? Still the narration does not come. It is as if the Ghost was himself anxious to postpone it, and so our expectation grows greater. But first comes,

'If thou didst ever thy dear father love.'

Hamlet breaks in with, 'O heaven.' How can the Ghost ask in this way? and now? How can Hamlet express his love for his father, now that he is moved by sympathy and fired by a longing to revenge him. He has to revenge his father, but he knows not on whom. First the Ghost says for what,

'Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.'

Hamlet bursts out, 'Murder!' Then the murder is described 'foul and most unnatural.' Hamlet,

‘Haste me to know it ; that I with wings as swift  
As meditation, or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge.’

“It is to be noticed here how the ‘By whom, that I may kill him,’ is artistically worked out. The urgent impulse is not expressed by hasty, swiftly spoken words. The swiftness is described ; he says he will be quick, but he is not quick. . . . And so the idea of Hamlet’s character and of the whole piece is expressed. The Ghost had just said,

‘I find thee apt ;  
And duller shouldst thou be,’ etc.

And Hamlet shows himself actually so dull. . . . After this long preparation, the words of the Ghost’s story make their most complete impression. The delay of both arouses the same feeling in the spectator, the same awe of what is to be told. The ingenuity of Shakespeare in these preparations is wonderful, so that almost every scene, if dissected in this way, shows that they are almost all constructed in this fashion.”

Again, he speaks in a more general way of Shakespeare and Schiller, *apropos* to the discussion of the difference between the realist and the idealist in their mode of handling their subjects : —

“The realist develops the fate of his hero by his guilt, and his guilt by his character and situation, his character by his rank, nature, habits, time, occupation, historical ground, etc. That is to say, his *rôles* are representative, typical beings, realistic, conditioned ideals ; the idealists are unconditioned ideals ; creatures of the fancy free from the conditions of reality. Whatever characterization they may have is not the condition of their nature, but is simply fastened upon them from the outside. Since he ascribes qualities which are not the outgrowth of their real nature, they appear at the same time more empirical, accidental, and nearer reality. What they say is of more importance to him than what they are, i. e. he lays the most weight upon their speeches and not upon their presentation. The realist judges his characters, sees for himself how and what they are, estimates them according to the laws by which we estimate human beings in real life. Romeo and Juliet are found beautiful from both points of view, they make an impression of poetic ideality and also of being real human beings. Schiller says, ‘To die for freedom, to kill one’s self for love, is great and noble, it is the fate of the beautiful,’ etc. Shakespeare says, ‘That that is the lot of guilt on the earth, suicide is a crime, but the person who commits may be deserving of our sympathy.’ That was Shakespeare’s humanity, to judge of the guilt, to pity the man ; his piety lay in his belief in a righteous order of the world. God, great and righteous, man weak and so deserving pity in his guilt ; not man great and noble in his guilt, and the order of the world a mischievous natural power, which hates what is noble and causes the beautiful to perish because it is beautiful. . . . The tragical necessity can only lie in the hero, i. e. the hero cannot merely stand in a so-called tragical situation ; the situation can only be tragic by the fact that the hero, who stands in it, is a tragical character. That this

Macbeth, as he stands before us in our immediate presence, must perish is certain. A man with so strong a conscience and such wicked passions. The best arranged external necessity does not make a piece tragical, if the hero is not a tragical nature. . . . Human beings must always interest us more than the abstract working of the machinery of the play. That is of use merely to set such and such characters in motion and to make them appear lifelike."

This extract, with its crudities of expression and its repetitions, may well represent a great deal of the book, which, notwithstanding, is one of the most valuable manuals of criticisms that we have seen for a long time. We trace the author from thought to thought as if he were talking to us: that is at once the merit and the defect of the book, though vastly more the former.

We close in recommending it heartily to the student of literature. At some day we hope that a well-selected translation may be made of the work.

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8. — *Their Wedding Journey.* By W. D. HOWELLS. Boston: J. R. Osgood & Co. 1872.

AN interesting question presents itself to the cautious critic who reads this little book, and who does not care to commit himself and his reputation for sound judgment irretrievably to the strength of such a gossamer-like web: it is whether the book will live. Why should it not live? If extreme and almost photographic truth to nature, and remarkable delicacy and lightness of touch, can give permanent life to a story, why should this one not be read with curiosity and enjoyment a hundred or two hundred years hence? Our descendants will find nowhere so faithful and so pleasing a picture of our American existence, and no writer is likely to rival Mr. Howells in this idealization of the commonplace. The vein which Mr. Howells has struck is hardly a deep one. His dexterity in following it, and in drawing out its slightest resources, seems at times almost marvellous, a perpetual succession of feats of sleight-of-hand, all the more remarkable because the critical reader alone will understand how difficult such feats are, and how much tact and wit is needed to escape a mortifying failure. Mr. Howells has a delicacy of touch which does not belong to man. One can scarcely resist the impression that he has had feminine aid and counsel, and that the traitor to her sex has taken delight in revealing the secret of her own attractions, so far at least as she knows it; for Mr. Howells, like the rest of mankind, after all his care and study, can only acknowledge his masculine incompetence to comprehend the female character. The book is essentially a lovers' book. It deserves